Why did the Nazis target the Jews specifically?

≡ **32 Answers**

Peter Dung, Data Scientist (2007-present)
Answered January 24, 2021 · Author has **212** answers and **182K** answer views

Originally Answered: What fuelled the Nazis' genocidal hatred of the Jews in particular?

Antisemitism has a long tradition in Europe and the Middle East.

To understand why the situation escalated so horrible in Germany, you have to take a look at the larger picture.

Germany lost WW1, despite Russia making peace in 1918 and the German army still fighting on French territory. Nevermind that Germany was starving and close to collapsing, from the soldiers point of view, Germany was still winning.

And then suddenly there is a new government, something called democracy and they are giving up. Not only giving up, but also accepting the whole guilt for the war and the extremely harsh and unfair conditions, dictated by France, the US and GB.

Imagine yourself to be a German soldier in 1919: you fought and suffered in a horrible war, you survived suicidal attacks, the constant artillery fire on the trenches, the gas attacks, you saw your comrades die or get mad and despite all this horror, you still where fighting on french turf.

And suddenly someone tells you "Thank you, but the war is lost, you can go home." You see your country humilated and plundered, you might even be forced to serve as a slave for a time, all under the eyes and with the acceptance of this strange new government.

How would you feel? Wouldn't you too look for someone to blame?

This led to the narratives of the "Schanddiktat von Versailles" and the "Dolchstoßlegende" — a conspiracy theory claiming the German army was betrayed by the democratic government, which grew in telling to a worldwide conspiracy of jewish capitalists.

So when the next crisis came in 1929, Germany was füll of armed veterans, seeing themselves already as victims of a jewish conspiracy and ready to be united and used by a ruthless leader, aiming for dictatorship.

And what Is the best way to make people commit attrocities? Tell them they are the victims and give them someone to blame. That's exactly what the NS regimes did: blame the traditional scapegoat, blame the Jews.

P.S.: Dear Trumpists and QAnons, recognised yourself somewhere here, did you?

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At the end of WWII, when the Jews who survived the Holocaust came home to the very places where many turned them in to the Nazis, what did they do?

Why did the Nazis kill the Jews and other groups instead of exiling them?

Years ago, I was told that in WW2, the Nazis had a senior ranking officer who was secretly Jewish. Is this true?

Dan Wolfe, Sola Scriptura Parakletos [I am what I am …]
Answered 3 years ago · Author has **679** answers and **171.9K** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis choose to vilify the Jews?

Until the end of WWI, most of German power was held by kaisers (just as Russian power was held by czars).

In regards to Germany, the last holdout (in regards to kaisers) was Wilhelm II (who would not relinquish claims to authority). Czar Nicholas II was forced out with the Russian revolution.

The aspect of identifying things as specifically Jewish happened with two issues.

Jewish people in Germany were no different than their gentile counterparts. From capitalist to communist, merchant to farmer, etc.

From Hitler's use of "Jewish" his focus was on communists and bankers.

When Hitler wrote Mein Kampf, there were four principal "leaders" of the communist movement (prior to Stalin manipulating absolute dominance). They were Joseph Stalin, Lev Kamenev, Grigory Zinoviev, and Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was very involved with numerous revolts in Europe (if not personally, verbally projecting support).

Within Germany, Kurt Eisner declared himself Prime Minister of Bavaria (which lasted a few months). When Eisner was murdered, Hitler is (rumored) to have attended his funeral.

One of Eisner's followers, Rosa Luxembourg, along with Karl Liebnecht led another communist uprising. They were part of a group called *Spartakusbund*(Sparatacus federation) [along with Leo Jogiches, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin - later controlled by Paul Levi]. There were, also, communists uprisings in the Finnish Civil War, Hungary and the Netherlands.

Instead of just commenting on Communism, Hitler put emphasis on the communist, who happened to be Jewish (pretty much everyone mentioned above - except a few].

There were many conflicts between Hitler's group and the communist groups in Germany.

The capitalist aspect, where Hitler focused on the "Jewishness" of individuals was the banking industry. However, Hitler was not the only one to focus on the "Jewishness" of what was happening in Germany.

In New York, when Hitler gained power, he opened a fund which people could borrow from, without paying interest ("usury"). Within New York, this was being commented on as Hitler attacking the finances of the Jews (instead of attack on the banking institution).

The international Jewish community fell into this interpretation and in March of 1933. the influence of this interpretation led to pursuing boycotts of German goods in other regional governments. When Hitler's government found out about this boycott (hard to miss, as the headline of the March 24, 1933 British Daily Express stated, "Judea Declares War on Germany"), they decided to have a boycott of Jewish goods in Germany on April 1, 1933. This is when they painted Yellow Star of Davids on the front of Jewish owned businesses, so nobody would shop there, that day. The German Jewish capitalists were not upset by this, as, although Jewish, their goods were [also]German.

The international Jewish community did not let up on the boycott (to destroy the German economy), however nations started "slacking off" and things were getting better until the death of Ernst vom Rath by a young Jewish assassin.

Before the German government got Herschel Grynszpan in custody (discovering the murder was the result of a "lover's spat"), the German assumption was that the assassination of a German diplomat by a Jewish individual was just an extension of the Jewish boycott (after finding the truth, Ernst vom Rath went from a "hero" to obscurity). The assassination of Ernst vom Rath (German diplomat) led to Kristallnacht.

This would be the extent of Jewish influence into Germany's politics.

Yes, Hitler was a supremacist egomaniac ... but he was not the only one "throwing fuel on the fire".

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Johnathan Soares
Answered January 28, 2021

Originally Answered: What fuelled the Nazis' genocidal hatred of the Jews in particular?

Hatred of the Jews was not something that the Nazis came up with. Hate and distrust of Jews was common throughout Europe for centuries prior because Jews were often considered the "other." What I mean when I

say that is that Jews had their own culture, their own language (Hebrew and sometimes Yiddish) and their own faith; even if they were patriotic Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, etc. they were still often treated as a foreign element.

And of course there's the element of envy involved. While the Jews faced institutional and violent persecution across generations, they persevered as a people and many Jews became people of great consequence in European society; many became doctors, lawyers, bankers, professors and other positions of prestige and influence. The hatred of Jews then became twofold; they were hated for being different and for achieving success.

Germany was severely beaten in World War I and the country was effectively destitute until Hitler came around. And who did a lot of Germans blame for the nation's misfortunes? The Jews. Why? Because, again, the Jews were considered the "other" and many people felt that German Jews had actually plotted against the nation so that winning the Great War was impossible. Never mind the fact that many German Jews fought for Germany in the Great War.

The Nazis needed a scapegoat to enable their dominance of Germany and rise to global power. Of course they chose the group of people who had been demonized for generations.

24 views

Phillip James Schaps, B.A. Aerospace and Aeronautical Engineering & Humanities, Embry-Riddle FL/AZ (2013)
Answered 1 year ago · Author has **5.9K** answers and **1.3M** answer views

Originally Answered: What caused the Nazis to possess so much hatred for the Jewish people?

Jews have been subject to unreasonable hatred by Christians since the formal founding of Christianity in 340 CE. Jews set themselves apart from the general population with distinctive clothing and cultural practices, and humans are naturally suspicious of people who are somehow different. There is also the idiotic idea that Jewish leaders in Jerusalem killed Jesus; when said fictional character was legally executed under Roman provincial law for assaulting Roman employed money changers. Anyway these things gave Christian Europeans plenty of "reason" to hate Jews.

Some more enlightened Christians monarchs rather than persecuting Jews instead made good use of them to make money for their countries. The Catholic Church early in its history instituted a prohibition against usury (lending money and charging interest). So some monarchs simply transferred banking activities to people who weren't covered by that prohibition, Jews. Especially after the Knights Templar were betrayed and exterminated in the 14th century, Jews became the primary bankers in Europe until the prohibition against usury was either rescinded or Europe just decided to ignore it. Their involvement in banking led to Jews being popularly considered greedy and untrustworthy. They ended up being used as scapegoats for everything from wars to plagues.

The last piece of the puzzle is conservative politics. For as long as conservatism practiced a key part of its ideology has been demonization of the "other"; the other being a catch all term for any group seen as being different from the majority population. Jews have been a useful "other" for conservatives to prey on for millennia.

139 views

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Did the Nazis ever spare Jews from death or camps that they deemed useful, for an example, a Jewish doctor or a Jew that could speak Russian?

How did the Nazis find out if a woman was Jewish or not?

Why were the Jews treated so badly, and why did the Nazis hate them so much?

Who are some examples of Jews the German Nazis made exceptions for or didn't go after?

Raquel Baranow, Owner at 666isMONEY, Lc (1999-present)
Answered 1 year ago · Author has **77** answers and **21.4K** answer views

Originally Answered: What caused the hatred towards the Jews by Nazi Germany?

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Thierry Etienne Joseph Rotty, Senior Controller at NATO
Answered 7 months ago · Author has **4.4K** answers and **24.9M** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis choose to vilify the Jews?

Blaming Jews for political capital had existed since the days of the Roman Empire.

A people without a country who can easily be identified make great domestic enemies.

If you want to deflect attention away from problems you go after a minority that cannot possibly defend itself.

Europe was pretty anti-semitic before the War, Israel did not exist, and the Nazis had to find a simple scapegoat.

Since blaming the Jews had done the trick for the past 2,000 years, why change tactics?

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Michael Safyan, Jewish American living in a Christian world. Interfaith event participant.
Answered 1 year ago · Author has **5K** answers and **3.4M** answer views

Originally Answered: What was the reason for Jews being so hated by the Nazis?

There was already a very long history of anti-Semitism in Europe, originally rooted in Christian religious prejudice. It was thus common for people to prejudge Jews negatively as other, foreign, evil and to blame Jews for their personal failings and misfortunes. By the time of the Nazis, there was already a long history from "Adversus Judaeos" to "On the Jews and their Lies," and numerous acts of forcible conversion, violence, expulsion, and mass murder. Following the Enlightenment, religion was no longer seen as a strong enough justification for such persecution, and so the originally religious prejudice added racial pseudo-science as a new justification to give it an additional rationalization. It was this racially-motivated form of prejudice that motivated Hitler and the Nazis. However, this prejudice was built on years and years of religious prejudice without which it wouldn't exist.

See also:

- Anti-Semitism: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum ⧉

- Why the Jews: History of Antisemitism - US Holocaust Memorial Museum ⧉

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185 views · Answer requested by Andrew Ryan

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Nicholas Levinski

Answered January 24, 2021 · Author has **165** answers and **24.9K** answer views

Originally Answered: What fuelled the Nazis' genocidal hatred of the Jews in particular?

Jewish people helped a lot in WW1. The whole economic department of Germany in WW1 was run by Jews. When Germany unexpectedly gave their unconditional surrender; Jewish people got blamed.

From 1918 to 1939; Jew hatred increased. Germans wrote books on how jews were racially inferior and bringing down Germany. Ultimately, Jewish people were considered a racial and national threat to get rid of. At first, they were put in camps and ghettos; later on they were killed.

In the field, the ss was there to secure the territory conquered by the German army by getting rid of dangerous elements to the German army; one of those 'dangerous elements' to the German army were Jewish people.

52 views

Benjamin Ferrandi, Studied Jewish history
Answered 2 years ago · Author has **2.1K** answers and **814.3K** answer views

Originally Answered: What was reason of Nazi hatred towards Jews?

The Nazis believed in the worst anti-Jewish conspiracy theories of their time. They also subscribed to a highly virulent form of biological racism. To them, all of Germany's problems came from Jews, and this was because of biological traits Jews always would have. While the Nazis certainly took these ideas much further than anybody else, they didn't invent them. The anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and biological racism they believed in were already in full flush across much of Europe before they rose to power.

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Alex Gossland
Answered 11 months ago · Author has **3.3K** answers and **2.1M** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis choose to vilify the Jews?

Antisemitism is a direct result of the religious tenets of the Roman Catholic Church, which, beginning with the Councils of Nicaea, sought to distance itself from its Judaic roots.

If you look at the geographical impact of antisemitism, you will find that the greater the influence of the Catholic Church, the greater the amount of antisemitism.

Countries where the Catholic Church historically had little or no influence (Asia, the Far East, etc.) had far less antisemitism because the dominant religions in those countries had no religious or cultural basis to persecute the Jews.

It was only following the rise of Islam with its similarly antisemitic dogma that we have seen a similar rise in antisemitism in countries where previously there had been none.
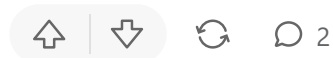
The problem was not limited to the Catholic Church in Europe alone, however, since the Catholic Church's policies poisoned the subsequent rise of the Protestant religions. Martin Luther, who was himself a rabid anti-

Semite as a result of the Catholic Church's cancerous doctrines , carried this poison into the subsequent rise of the Protestant sects.

Evangelical Christian support for Israel today is based on the realization that the return of the Jewish people to their homeland after 2,000 years of conquest, exile, dispersion and genocidal attempts to destroy them is an undeniable fulfillment of 4,000 year old prophecies that is a tangible miracle in this day and age.

The responsibility for horrors experienced by the Jews over the past two millennia can be laid squarely at the foot of the Roman Catholic Church in the West and at the foot of Islam for the antisemitism in the West, the Middle and Far East.

89 views

⤒   ⤓   ↻   💬 2   ↗

Yoav Arviv
Answered 1 year ago

Originally Answered: What was the reason for Jews being so hated by the Nazis?

IF ANYONE HAS CORRECTIONS PLEASE COMMENT :)

As I remember, the Jews were partially blamed for the WWI agreement that was signed by the Wermai Republic, that caused Germany to be in huge debt, take full responsibility of the war, lose territories and more.

The Nazis believed in Scientific racism, They thought the Aryan race was the superior race, the Slavs to be inferior to the Germanic master race and the Jews, homosexuals and more as "life unworthy of life" meaning they had no right to live, are a disease.

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Roger Kinnard, neurologist/investor
Answered January 23, 2021 · Author has **15.9K** answers and **3.8M** answer views

Originally Answered: What fuelled the Nazis' genocidal hatred of the Jews in particular?

Hatred of the Jews has been around well before the Nazis; read the Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare. Jews were expelled from England under Edward I. Pogroms were widespread in Middle Ages.

Jews are still under attack here in America and things have gotten worse recently. Anti-Semitism in the US hits 4-decade high: report | DW | 12.05.2020 ↗

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Ron Hoffman, studied Talmudic Law & Torah at Ohr Somayach (1994)
Updated March 9, 2021 · Author has **898** answers and **71.4K** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis hate Jewish people so much?

1. 2000 years of Christian theological calumny (defamation) convinced Europeans Jews are bad.

2. Hitler's youth, weaned on Austrian political antisemitism.

3. The Wall Street Stock Market Crash in 1929 caused a worldwide depression hitting hard German jobs and economy.

Thus the stage was set to take revenge upon the perceived enemy. Don't imply the innocent deserved it.

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Anonymous
Answered March 7, 2021

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis hate Jewish people so much?

Nazis like any para military group were trained to accept the dictums administered by the state ..they were taught to kiss ass or face unpleasant reprisal; so fear contributed to the propagandizing and once the ball was set in motion humanism became an obstacle to "progress"..in Adolf's Germany, dissenters from the established Nazi norm went into the kamps...

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Asaf Rodenscky, Technician at Bezeq International (2008-present)
Answered 2 years ago · Author has **889** answers and **82.5K** answer views

Originally Answered: What was the cause of the Nazis' hatred for the Jews?

the short version? everybody Hitler liked was an antisemite. longer version? Jews have been the preferred scapegoat in European couture for about 2,000 years. you really didn't need much in order to make people blame them for everything wrong in life. Hitler hit a goldmine with his antisemitism and simply played that card to it's fullest.

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Laine Frajberg, Retired
Answered 2 years ago · Author has **7.4K** answers and **1.5M** answer views

Originally Answered: What was reason of Nazi hatred towards Jews?

Germany had unexpectedly lost WW1,after a series of spectacular victories.Many Germans found it too painful to admit that the mighty German army had actually been defeated in France+Belgium in the last 100 days of that war.Far easier to blame a Jewish cabal for (allegedly) stabbing the army in the back.

88 views

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Bruce Irvine, 63 years of life and advanced education in the USA.
Updated October 10, 2020 · Author has **313** answers and **112K** answer views

Originally Answered: What was the reason for Jews being so hated by the Nazis?

Lots of inherited hates and envies throughout the Nazi party. Some psych based phobias in the senior leadership

They were a very convenient scapegoat. They were very useful to the Nazis, because they could be blamed for anything wrong, they were powerless to defend themselves and yet they had lots of assets that the Nazis could plunder to fund NSDAP activities and later IIIR government deficits.

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Ilan Elron, knows stuff, shares opinions, love-hate Quora
Answered 1 year ago · Author has **9.3K** answers and **896.6K** answer views

Originally Answered: What was the reason for Jews being so hated by the Nazis?

Their fuhrer and his acolytes sold all Germans a complex set of fabrications in **blaming all of Germany's woes on Jews**. It was packaged in simple words, accessible to all, and, linked with other nationalistic and supremacist stuff, ascended to the status of an extra-Biblical addition to the religion of the land.

That fell on, and blossomed out of rich, doubly fertile ground: the propensity of Germans to conform and obey, and their innate******* anti-Semitism.

*** Idk whether it was deeper and more endemic than in the rest of Europe.

105 views

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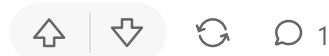

Mark Haefner, works at Self-Employment
Answered 2 years ago · Author has **373** answers and **182K** answer views

Originally Answered: What was reason of Nazi hatred towards Jews?

the opinion of Nazis was, that jews are controlling the monetary system by suspicious activities. This hate was growing up from middleage, because it was not possible integrating jews in the civil german society

56 views

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Gary John, Wrote apologetics course
Answered 3 years ago · Author has **161** answers and **14K** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis choose to vilify the Jews?

Jews promoted policies that were hostile to the interests of the local population.

ex. Promoting communist ideals to prevent racial unity. Jews also produced a lot of filth and porn during pre-WW2 Germany. They also hated Christianity.

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Andrew Michael Lenihan, knows Spanish

Answered 1 year ago · Author has **7.9K** answers and **1.4M** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis choose to vilify the Jews?

Hitler was mentally ill.

Hitler was a true believer in anti-Jewish racism.

The Nazis used propaganda to brainwash the German people. Then some Germans really went along with the antisemitic program.

34 views

David Good, Student of history

Answered 3 years ago · Author has **2.7K** answers and **672.8K** answer views

Originally Answered: Why did the Nazis choose to vilify the Jews?

This should answer your question!

For the record Trump did the same thing to the Muslims that the Nazi's did to the Jews minus the gas chambers

Naturally, the common people don't want war, neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But the people can alwaysbe brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.

It works the same way in every country.

−Hermann Goering
during the Nuremberg Trials

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Cem Arslan, Amateur military historian and fiction writer
Answered 9 months ago · Author has **1.5K** answers and **28.7M** answer views

What happened to the 100,000+ Jews who fought for Germany in WW1? Many were awarded the Iron Cross. Were any of them spared after Hitler came to power?

For the first few years, of Hitler's rule, the Jewish veterans of the Great War could rest if not 'easy', but at least somewhat undisturbed.

For those first few years, they had a seemingly inexorable protector looking out for them, in form of *Reichspräsident* Paul von Hindenburg. Hindenburg wasn't exactly a man wholly fond of Jews, and had expressed anti-Semitism in the past: but his anti-Semitism didn't even remotely approach the levels typical of

the National Socialists. More importantly, Hindenburg was an old minded man with old ideals, who kept dear the memories of the *Weltkrieg* in which he had played so major a role.

Hindenburg, in his old age, was hardly the most vigorous of people, and his health was declining. Nevertheless, in certain issues, he could prove an inexorable obstacle to Hitler. As a war hero and reliable head of state, Hindenburg was probably the most popular politician in Germany, and as *Reichspräsident* he held the power to rule by presidential decree, dissolve the government, or fire the *Reichskanzler*(that is, Hitler) if he desired. And this power wasn't just theoretical: it was backed by a broad popular support, overwhelming loyalty of the Army, as well as members of *Der Stahlhelm* and the old Freikorps veterans: these latter two, through their traditional party DNVP's alliance with NSDAP, formed a major part of the NSDAP's support base, yet they wouldn't stand with Hitler against Hindenburg.

For this reason, when the NSDAP drafted a civil service law hot on the heels of the Enabling Act, a law that would effectively force all non-Aryan civil servants to retire, and when Hindenburg wrote to Hitler expressing stern disapproval of this treatment being forced upon veterans of the Great War and their relatives, the Nazis acted *immediately*. The law was amended in a matter of days to exclude anyone who could prove frontline service in the First World War, their immediate relatives, and those who'd been in civil service continuously since the start of the First World War.

But inexorable though Hindenburg could be, he was not immortal: by the time Hitler came to power, the man was well into his eighties, and cancer was gnawing at him.

On 2 August 1934, the 86-year old field marshal died in his home at Neudeck. Before his body was even cold, it was announced that the title of presidency would remain formally vacant and Hitler be the head of state and government both, in accordance with a law passed one day prior with Hindenburg on his deathbed. He would be interred next to his wife at Tannenberg Memorial, with one of the most magnificent funerals Germany ever witnessed: his corpse would, eleven years later, be hurriedly evacuated from where it was buried for fear of defilement by the Soviets, and the monument itself was first partially looted by Soviets for materials and then fully demolished by Poland in 1949. Its marble would later be used for a variety of construction projects, including the Communist Party headquarters in Warsaw.

In the months following Hindenburg's death, the privileges he'd seized for Jewish veterans of the *Weltkrieg* were slowly rolled back, and finally vanished with the Nuremberg Laws. *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten,* a Jewish veterans' organization built upon the tenet of fierce and steadfast loyalty to Germany, was outlawed in 1936 and formally dissolved two years later. Though the few, who had friends from the war now in places of authority in the new regime, found themselves protected by those friends, many of those old fighters were treated no different from Germany's other Jews.

Thus was the fate those men, as fierce and as loyal citizens as any Germany had ever possessed, their sacrifices ignored, their loyalty disregarded. The cold earth took most of them, in secrecy and in silence, and many were simply forgotten.

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Isaiah Tanenbaum, Reform Jew, Rabbi's kid, former religious school teacher
Answered 3 years ago · Author has **272** answers and **1.8M** answer views

Did all Nazis hate Jews? Was there a law saying that you had to treat the Jews badly, or did all Nazis hate Jews?

The Nuremberg Laws ⬚ dictated precisely how Jews were to be treated ("badly" is only the half of it), and have been well covered elsewhere by other respondents.

However, there is a popular misconception that all Nazis, or even all Germans, hated Jews with a passion. In fact, the reality was much more sinister than that. It seems that **most Nazis, *even the most ardent*, had no opinion either way on the Jews.**

Michael Muller-Claudius interviewed 61 longtime Nazi Party members in 1938, and again in 1942. In must be emphasized that these were not recent band-wagoners, or those who joined out of career considerations, but the true believers who had been with the Party since before Hitler's ascension to Chancellor in 1933.

"This Jewish problem still hasn't been cleared up" Muller-Claudius offered, or "I wonder what this Solution will be?" Secretly, he kept track of their responses.

In 1938, only 5% (3 Nazis out of 61) gave responses that he categorized as extremely hateful or antisemitic. 67% responded with indignation, saying that this was just idle talk to excite the masses but not the true beliefs of the Party, or even in a few cases with a straight-up rejection of antisemitism. The remaining 28% responded with indifference ("that's not something I worry about" or "that's Hitler's problem to solve" or "we shouldn't talk of this").

In 1942 (post Wanassee, post invasion of the USSR, long after it was quite clear to even mid-level bureaucrats what was happening to the Jews), **that same 5% of rabid Jew haters hadn't grown at all.** But the "indignant" and "indifferent" numbers had flipped. Now, **two thirds didn't care to think about what might be happening to the Jews.**

The goal of the Nazi policy and propaganda was not to turn more Germans into Jew haters. Nor was it necessary.

Nazi policy and propaganda turned the sympathetic into the indifferent, and in that way the 5% were able to effect their genocide.

Muller-Claudius' original findings ⬚ were only ever published in German and have long since fallen out of print, but you can read write-ups of his studies in various places, including in this article in the Atlantic ⬚, where there is additional context, or in greater detail in the book ⬚ that they are discussing, by Ian Krenshaw, an excerpt of which ⬚ can be found on Google Books.

See also "Confessions of a Hitler Youth", a half-hour program from HBO from 1991 that interviewed Alfons Heck ⬚, a former Youth Officer of the Hitler Youth. You can watch the program in its entirety on YouTube:

At 13:09, he says:

In 1940, the first deportations of the Jews of Germany began. One of the first ones occurred in my hometown. I recognized all of them, naturally, but there were some I had known intimately as a boy. **I had no personal animosity toward them** *but I felt what a misfortune that they are Jewish and I thought it was completely justified that for the survival of Germany they too needed to be deported.*

Despite the fact that the first friend of my life — Heinz Ehrlman [sp?] — was Jewish, within the space of six years **the constant Nazi indoctrination had made me totally indifferent to their fate** *and I accepted the deportation as a just measure.*

(emphasis added)

If ever you find yourself growing disinterested in what is happening to an oppressed group, if it feels like too much "trouble" to address their concerns, or a "distraction from real problems", recall Muller-Claudius' findings, recall Alfons Heck. Do not become the 2/3rds of Nazi Party members who closed their eyes and ears to the suffering around them, allowing through their indifference the 5% do what they wished in their dark, dark hearts.

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Doug Welch, Digital Preservation Specialist (2018-present)
Answered 4 years ago · Author has **326** answers and **531.1K** answer views

How did Nazis in World War II identify Jews? What did they resort to if they were just suspicious of someone being a Jew?

Originally Answered: How did Nazis in World War II identify Jews?

The Nazis were kind of, uh, selective about which Jews they wanted to hunt, incarcerate and kill. There were many people who were the result of modern non-practicing Jews marrying Germans and having "mixed race" offspring commonly called *Mischlingen* (mixed race). I myself do not subscribe to race theory, but the Nazis essentially used terms from animal breeding to describe how "pure" or "impure" people were. But it's a mistake to think that Germans from the early 20th century had not ever been raped, conquered or commingled with in 21 centuries of participating in European history. But the very idea that there were Germans who had some Jews in their family tree and nevertheless inherited physical traits that made them look "Aryan" drove the Nazis *crazy*.

Add to this the fact that many assimilated and practicing Jews served honorably and even heroically in the Imperial German Army in WW1 and you have a nightmare for hard-core Nazis. It has even been rumored that
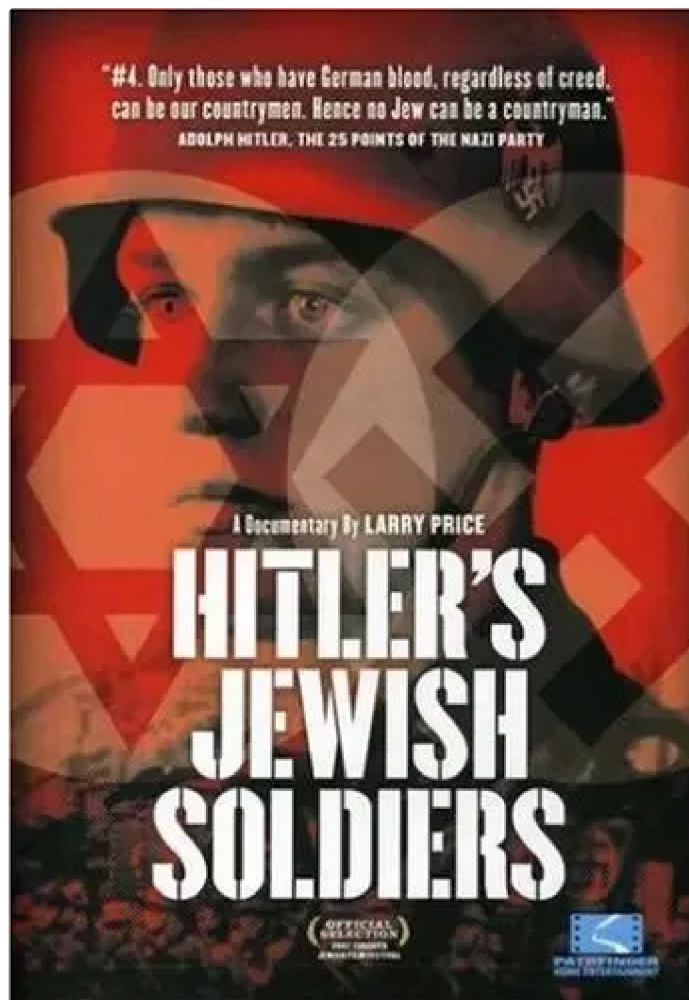
the officer who signed off on Hitler's Iron Cross Second Class (EK II) was Jewish but I have not seen any proof of this story.

Also, Jews had a certain privileged status in the Wilhelmine years. Germany had a tradition of "court Jews" who were financiers for the petty German princes. Although the German ruling class had an antisemitic streak going back as far as Martin Luther, Jews in Germany had it pretty well off compared to their cousins in the Russian Empire, the Hapsburg dominions or the Balkans. In fact it was this factor that led to many French people suspecting that Jews in their country were in league with Germany, as seen in the Dreyfus Affair.

If you were living in a *shtetl* between Prussia and the Volga River, yes, you were pretty much dead meat when the Nazis came, but there were a number of assimilated Jews who were "useful" for the Nazis. Even if you were even a full-blooded Jew who maybe financed the Nazis in their early years, when they fought against Bolsheviks and union activists, you could get a special certificate saying you had been made an honorary Aryan.

Author Bryan Mark Rigg, himself an American citizen who served in the Israeli army, wrote an astonishing book called *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers* that really fleshes this out, but some of the Jews who served that Nazis included none other than **Erich von Manstein**, born Eduard Lewinski but adopted by his German stepdad. He was Hitler's most able field marshal but get a look at the shnozz on him! I believe Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Third Reich's military intelligence apparatus, the *Abwehr*, might have had Jewish ancestry as well and Hermann Goering's #2 **Eduard Milch** was also a *Mischling*. It goes deeper and gets weirder as **Reinhard Heydrich**, architect of the Final Solution was rumored by his enemies within the Party to have Jewish ancestry. Yes, he had straw blond hair and ice blue eyes, but get a look at his profile and you might think his grandmother had a good recipe for matzoh ball soup.

Bryan Mark Rigg gets a lot of mileage out of the photo on the cover of the book, which is a photo used by Nazis and Nazi sympathizers in the German military as a quick reference as to how "Aryan" a German soldier ought to look, but the *Landser* in the photo is half Jewish.

So the Nazis resorted to all kinds of pseudo-science in order to track down Jews, especially in communities the Nazis didn't like. They made up templates regarding eye color and hair color and had reference guides to familiarize Jew hunters with "Jewish" looking traits like shapes of brow ridges or noses. But when it came to Jews who could be of value to the Nazis, the Nazis seemed to give them a pass. This neither excuses nor in any way denies the fact that millions and millions of Jews were murdered, incarcerated and mistreated by the

Nazi regime and its allies, but it does expose the pseudo-science and quackery of Race Theory as practiced all over the world, even in Britain and the US, during the time when the Nazis were around. It was only in the aftermath of the Holocaust that academics and scientists examined Race Theory and finally rejected it. This also serves as a kind of warning to academics and other pseudo scientists in the present era that maybe scientific consensus may not exactly mean that an issue is settled.

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Robert M. Siegfried, works at Adelphi University
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If Judaism is only a religion, how could the Nazis detect a Jewish person or even a Jewish descendant without making mistakes?

Jews are an ethnoreligious group, an ethnicity with its own religion. We have our own languages (Hebrew, with sub-populations having creoles of local languages, such as Yiddish and Ladino), customs, and common ancestry.

Ashkenazic Jews have a mixture of Semitic ancestry (from the Fertile Crescent) and European ancestry from a variety of sources (Italian, Greek, and whatever countries our ancestors lived in). Many Ashkenazim are relatively dark, at least compared to northern European peoples amongst whom our ancestors lived, have dark hair, and can look somewhat Middle Eastern. To a large extent, many of us don't blend into the population of Germany, Poland and other countries where our families lived.

We frequently have last names that are either of Hebraic origin, such as Cohen and Levi, and names in German and various Slavic languages that are not as common amongst Gentiles, such as Goldberg, Weiss, Schwartz, Adler, Eisen, Kurtz, Gross and Schneider. Other names are patronyms such as Jacobowitz, Abramowitz, and (my favorite ;-) Szmuelwicz (Samuelson in Polish).

None of these distinctions are foolproof. Siegfried is not usually a Jewish name but my family took it about 250 years ago. My mother was blonde with a button nose. And I've known Jews who look far more German most Nazi war criminals. If you add to this that European passports or identity documents usually had religion on them, the Nazis could guess correctly a lot of the time. And there were collaborators helped point out where Jews lived.

When my father applied for the Master's program in History at Columbia University, the third and fourth line on the application were race and religion. They couldn't ask that when I applied to Columbia College, its undergraduate liberal arts school. But they wanted mother's maiden name and picture. And I don't doubt for a second that they were trying to use that to figure who the Jews were, so they wouldn't take too many.

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At the end of WWII, when the Jews who survived the Holocaust came home to the very places where many turned them in to the Nazis, what did they do?

Not many people know that the Jews were still considered "enemy aliens" by the US military, who did not know what to do with them, since no one in Europe wanted to take them in. The oh-so-helpful Red Cross woke up from a 12-year coma to help these DPs (what they called "displaced persons") find places to settle. One joke is that a Red Cross "worker" asked a DP, "Where would you live if you could?" The man replied, "Australia." The worker was shocked and exclaimed, "But that's so far!" The Jewish man asked, "From where?"

Of course, there were stories of Jews, particularly from Poland, who returned to what had once been their homes, only to be chased away or sometimes killed, by their former neighbors. In some cases, these were the very people who turned the Jews over to the SS, and they were not about to relinquish their new homes under any circumstances. Rather than be sorry or respectful of the ordeal their former neighbors had been through, the Poles and others were bitterly resentful toward the Jews. They saw Jews as the ones who caused all the problems to begin with, the ones who brought the occupation upon them, the ones who made them look bad in the eyes of the world.

Everyone wants to be right and look cool, and in their minds, the Jews had robbed them of both those things. Of course, the Poles continued to suffer greatly under the Soviets, but as a Holocaust survivor I know once aptly remarked, "Everything Poland deserved, it got."

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Mark Daly, fascinated learning about history
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What if you lied about someone being Jewish in Nazi Germany but they weren't?

But they were not Jewish? Then there would be documentation to prove they were not Jewish and you might be arrested or maybe only a slap on the wrist. Why?

Because German Jews were documented for generations. As one example, the Judenzählung ↗ ("Jewish census") was conducted in October 1916. The purpose of this census was to prove German Jews were not supporting the war (WW1) effort *except* it proved the opposite. The Kaiser's government didn't publish the results but the Nazis had easy access to these records.

Other records included "*census records, tax returns, synagogue membership lists, parish records (for converted Jews), routine but mandatory police registration forms, the questioning of relatives, and from information provided by neighbors and municipal officials.*" [source ↗]

Jews had been complying with government documentation requirements for generations. A person who was not Jewish would be found in records that proved they were not Jewish and that you were wasting the Nazi officials' time. There's a good chance they would not like being lied to like that.

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What would have been the public reaction in Nazi Germany if Hitler told the German people about the Holocaust and that he was ordering killing the Jews and other people?

The irony of the question is he did tell the entire Germany that the Jews were the cause of Germany's bad economy and blamed the Jews for everything, including their defeat and poor living conditions after WWI.

And of course with pure luck and coincidence a Jewish boy shot a German politician (I think) in Paris for some reason and this allowed Hitler to use this opportunity to make the Germans hate the Jews even more, which led on to the events such as the Night of Broken Glass, known as Kristallnacht, where the Hitler's personal army, the Schutzstaffel, went along the streets and smashed Jewish shops and houses, hence the name Night of Broken Glass.

Hitler blamed the Jews for practically any flaws in Germany and made himself look like a hero in front of the Germans who can help save them from their misery, which he of course did, when he improved Germany's economy, give jobs to everyone and everything was fine. He could have been hailed as a hero in Germany despite his hatred for Jews because he indeed helped improved the lives of many Germans.

Until he decided to remilitarise the Rhineland and then move to acquire Czechoslovakia, and then tried to annex the Sudetenland to acquire the Free city of Danzig, which is the button that triggered WWII.

Edit : My mistake, it wasn't that the annexation of the Sudetenland that triggered WWII, it was the invasion of Poland which triggered WWII.

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Grégoire Senneville, former Sales Director (2017-2018)
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Why did Hitler say before WW2 that if the "Jewish financiers plunged Europe into war, it would be the Jews themselves who would be erradicated?" Who were the "Jewish financiers"? And how were they causing war in Hitler's view?

The prime example in his rhetoric (and many conspiracy theories) is the Rothschild family who actually did finance governments and wars since the end of the dark ages. Although only one of many Jewish family's it is worth noting that in europe many financiers and bankers (but neither the majority of jews were in finances nor the majority of financiers were jewish). This situation arised from the fact that before the renaissance (the Medici bank) it was, overall, illegal to loan money and charge interests to people of your own faith. The Shakespearian character of Shylock comes to mind as an illustration of that situation. Jewish have gotten bad reputation in europe since before the advent of christianity, including during the 1st world war or the 19th century. Hitler was stressing a widespread false belief that had been catered for millennias, emphasizing on a few scattered examples to illustrate his purpose.

Worth noting, this is the technique used by every demagogues to further their agenda. Hitler was unfortunately a very good demagogue.

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Paul Merzejski, know something about WWII
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Why were so many civilians in Nazi occupied countries like Poland and the Ukraine so quick to kill Jews once able to do so in WW2? What caused this undercurrent of antisemitism? These weren't Nazi's, they were civilians.

First I would question the claim that many civilians were quick to kill Jews. It's first and foremost the "many" part I'd call into scrutiny. We don't really have that many recorded instances of civilian population turning on the Jews. The registered cases are from eastern Poland which between 1939-41 was occupied by the Soviets. All taking place in the wake of the German arrival. Most often mentioned are the events in the town of Jedwabne and in the city of Lwow. In the instance of Jedwabne the local residents appear to have locked some Jews in a barn before setting it on fire, in Lwow some Ukrainians assaulted Jews in the form of beatings, presumably there were also some fatal casualties. In addition to these two there had also been some minor incidents at other locations.

We don't know exactly what led to the killings in Jedwabne. My personal belief is that to understand what happened there one would need intimate knowledge of the relations in that town, down to interpersonal level. Much of it is lost to history. In absence of a concrete explanation people try to come up with some more general ones.

One possible universal reason is what Peter King has already mentioned in his post. Some people are capable of most hideous acts, often on trivial grounds. This becomes especially conspicuous when the law breaks down.

Some researchers claim the locals who earlier worked or openly collaborated with the Soviets now wanted to redeem themselves before the Germans by assaulting Jews.

A less obvious reason has to do with the political and military situation in eastern Poland. When the Soviets invaded Poland in September 1939, parts of the Jewish community welcomed them. Not necessarily because the Jews were favourably inclined towards the Soviets. Sometimes it had to do with the false perception the Soviets were coming to help fend off the Germans. Whatever the Soviet intentions were, to a Jew Soviet occupation would appear as a lesser evil than the German occupation. The news describing the treatment of the Jews in Germany was making rounds long before the war. However, to the remaining population the prospect of Soviet occupation was more terrifying because of the Soviets' abysmal reputation. At least in the opening stages of the war the Germans were widely considered more civilized. Hence anyone cheering the Soviets would immediately trigger suspicion. If on top of that later came some Soviet imposed commissar, who happened to be a Jew, with the power to send locals off to Siberian labour camps on a whim, the stage was set for a revenge once the Germans arrived. People like to generalize, and this tendency sometimes leads to introduction of unjustified collective responsibility.

It's important to realise that ethnic violence taking place in eastern Poland between 1941 and 1945 did only affect Jews. Elements of the Ukrainian population went on killing spree targeting the local Polish population - Massacres of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia - Wikipedia ↗. Whenever one talks about the Jews, one needs to keep in mind that whatever happened to them was not just a one-dimensional case of anti-semitism as some would have it. It was a part of a wider and deeper problem involving multiple ethnicities common to

that region. Ultimately whatever latent conflicts there might have been, it was the Soviet and German invasion that unleashed them.

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Related Questions

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Did all Nazis hate Jews? Was there a law saying that you had to treat the Jews badly, or did all Nazis hate Jews?

At the end of WWII, when the Jews who survived the Holocaust came home to the very places where many turned them in to the Nazis, what did they do?

Why did the Nazis kill the Jews and other groups instead of exiling them?

Years ago, I was told that in WW2, the Nazis had a senior ranking officer who was secretly Jewish. Is this true?

Why did the Nazis make the Jews suffer and then kill them?

Did the Nazis ever spare Jews from death or camps that they deemed useful, for an example, a Jewish doctor or a Jew that could speak Russian?

How did the Nazis find out if a woman was Jewish or not?

Why were the Jews treated so badly, and why did the Nazis hate them so much?

Who are some examples of Jews the German Nazis made exceptions for or didn't go after?

Why did the Nazis kill Jews during the Holocaust when it didn't benefit them in any way?

What did the Nazis do to the Jews?

Why didn't Hitler put the Jews to work or draft them instead of killing them?

Before the Nazis attacked the Jews, what party were they targeting?

Why did the Nazis consider Jews a race?